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THE ROLE OF PARTHIA AND ARMENIA IN TACITUS *ANNALS* 11 AND 12

Tacitus' accounts of events in Parthia and Armenia in the Claudius books have long been dismissed as diversion or dramatic retardation from the main plot at Rome. Syme's assessment is typical:

> The historian in the meantime, for relief and variety from palace politics, has recourse to a pair of digressions on affairs beyond the eastern frontier under the years 49 and 51 (not of any great moment or relevance).[1]

It seems unwise to disregard the importance of the eastern scenes to the design of the narrative, given their prominence in Books 11 and 12.[2] This paper will demonstrate that Tacitus uses the eastern accounts in Books 11 and 12 to articulate one of his central concerns: the inevitable pattern which dynastic politics follow, be they Roman or foreign. By playing on this theme the historian creates a contrapuntal effect between events at Rome and those in the East. Far from diverting the reader from in-

[1] R. Syme, *Tacitus* (Oxford 1958) 259. B. Walker, *The Annals of Tacitus, a Study in the Writing of History*[2] (Manchester 1960) 34-35, regards such passages as 11.8-10 as outside Tacitus' main theme of Roman moral decline. See also K. P. Seif, *Die Claudiusbücher in den Annalen des Tacitus* (Diss. Mainz 1973) 59-63; 237-41; 257-58. D.W.T.C. Vessey, "Thoughts on Tacitus' Portrayal of Claudius," *AJP* 92 (1971) 385-409, sees a parallel between the situation at Rome and in the East but then dismisses all the eastern narratives as digressions. According to C. W. Mendell, *Tacitus the Man and his Work* (New Haven 1957) 185, the eastern sections in Books 11 and 12 prepare for Corbulo's campaigns in Books 13-15. See also F. Graf, *Untersuchungen über die Composition der Annales des Tacitus* (Diss. Bern 1931) 94-95, on 12.44-51 as a retarding moment from Agrippina's machinations at Rome. The text used in this paper is E. Koestermann (Leipzig 1965).

[2] Foreign affairs account for about 40% of the extant chapters with the east comprising one-fifth of the total Claudian narrative. Syme, op. cit., 494-96, argues that Tacitus dwelt on Parthia at such length to provide a corrective to Trajan's disastrous campaign there. Yet Syme also acknowledges, p. 496, that Tacitus' views on eastern policy were "equitable and elusive" and that the historian treats ironically Claudius' argument at 12.11 which allegedly echoes Hadrian's. For a history of Roman-Parthian relations, see K. H. Ziegler, *Die Beziehungen zwischen Rom und dem Partherreich* (Wiesbaden 1965).

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trigue within the *domus Caesaris*, the eastern sections draw him back to the main narrative and often foreshadow the next step in the escalating quarrels among the Julio-Claudians.

The first extant eastern section in the Claudius books, 11.8-10, under A.D. 47, begins with Claudius' restoration of Mithridates to the throne of Armenia. The focus of the narrative, however, is on the internal politics of Parthia, the power struggle between Gotarzes and his brother Vardanes. Despite the opening *sub idem tempus* (11.8.1), the story is out of place chronologically since it relates events of A.D. 43 to 48. It has not been placed here for dramatic retardation since no high point had been reached in 11.1-7, nor does the action at Rome resume where it left off before the excursus. Rather 11.8-10 foreshadow events at Rome in the chapters immediately following. The foreshadowing is a general one of motive and consequences, not a point by point analogy between the situation at Rome and in Parthia.

The wars between the Parthian princes in 11.8-10 prepare the reader for the beginning of a new chapter of dynastic intrigue at Rome, the rivalry between Domitius and Britannicus announced at 11.11.2 when the two appear in the *lusus Troiae* at the secular games. There Tacitus alludes prematurely to the eventful supremacy of Nero over his stepbrother, the legitimate heir:

> sedente Claudio circensibus ludis, cum pueri nobiles equis ludicrum Troiae inirent interque eos Britannicus imperatore genitus et L. Domitius adoptione mox in imperium et cognomentum Neronis adscitus, favor plebis acrior in Domitium loco praesagii acceptus est (11.11.2).

Rivalry of brothers for power is endemic to dynastic rule at Rome from the beginning of the *Annals*. Tiberius' inferior position among Augustus' heirs is touched upon in Tacitus' first and final assessments, 1.3.1-3 and 6.51:

> ubi domum Augusti privignus introiit, multis aemulis conflictatus est, dum Marcellus et Agrippa, mox Gaius Luciusque Caesares viguere; etiam frater eius Drusus prosperiore civium amore erat (6.51.1).[3]

[3] Cf. 13.17.1, the hasty funeral of Britannicus: *in campo tamen Martis sepultus est, adeo turbidus imbribus, ut vulgus iram deum portendi crediderit*

On the other hand, the harmony between Tiberius' heirs, Drusus and his brother Germanicus, is recorded as a rarity: *sed fratres egregie concordes et proximorum certaminibus inconcussi* (2.43.6). The rivalry theme will reappear in Book 12 both at Rome and in the East.

At 11.8-10 Tacitus also explores one of the controlling themes of the *Annals*, the pathology of despotism.[4] Like fraternal discord, this motif binds together the Roman and eastern sections. The negative qualities associated with the actual rulers of Rome, Claudius' wives, are those ascribed to the dynasts of Parthia and Armenia. Once Vardanes gains control of Parthia he displays an intolerable truculence that prompts his subjects to assassinate him: *regreditur ingens gloria atque eo ferocior et subiectis intolerantior* (11.10.3). Mithridates, once resettled in Armenia, shows a similar ill-timed arrogance: *et cuncta in Mithridaten fluxere, atrociorem quam novo regno conduceret* (11.9.2). Gotarzes, who succeeds the slain Vardanes, proves little better than his brother:

> dein praevaluit Gotarzes; potitusque rerum per saevitiam ac luxum adegit Parthos mittere ad principem Romanum occultas preces, quis permitti Meherdaten patrium ad fastigium orabant (11.10.4).

Agrippina is characterized as *atrox* at 12.22.1 and 13.13.3 and by *ferocia* at 13.2.2 and 13.21.2. *Saevitia* and *luxus* will contribute to Messalina's ruin in Book 11 (11.12.1; 11.31.2).

Dominatio and *regnum*, the standard vocabulary for the eastern monarchies here as throughout the *Annals* (11.8.1; 11.8.3; 11.9.2; 11.10.1), are used of Agrippina's single-minded quest for power in Book 12. Thus Tacitus sums up her character at 12.7.3:[5]

> versa ex eo civitas, et cuncta feminae oboediebant, non per lasciviam, ut Messalina, rebus Romanis inludenti. adduc-

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adversus facinus, cui plerique etiam hominum ignoscebant, antiquas fratrum discordias ut insociabile regnum aestimantes.

[4] Cf. Walker, op. cit., 25-32; 213-14. See also Vessey, op. cit., 391.

[5] For other instances of Agrippina's *dominatio*, see 12.4.1; 12.8.2; 13.2.2; 14.2.2 and 14.11.2; for her *regnum*, see 12.65.2. A. Mehl, *Tacitus über Kaiser Claudius: die Ereignisse am Hof* (Munich 1974) 125, observes that none of the key words of the principate such as *potentia*, *dominatio*, *regnum* or *libido dominandi*, is used of Claudius. On Tacitus' use of *regnum* and *dominatio* for

> tum et quasi virile servitium: palam severitas ac saepius superbia; nihil domi impudicum, nisi dominationi expediret. cupido auri immensa obtentum habebat, quasi subsidium regno pararetur (12.7.3).

Servitium, here applied to Agrippina's rule, characterizes the lot of the eastern peoples throughout the *Annals*, just as it had the behavior of Senate and consuls under Augustus and Tiberius.[6]

The reader will further associate the eastern narrative at 11.8-10 with intrigue in the *domus Caesaris* when he sees that the same sequence of plot by one family member or faction against the king appears in both courts. At 11.10.3 fear and insecurity prompt a sudden attack on Vardanes (*qui dolo ante composito incautum venationique intentum interfecere*) just as fear had initially prompted the nobles to call him in against his brother (11.8.2). So at the beginning of Silius and Messalina's intrigue against Claudius, Silius urges a quick strike against the *princeps* in order to catch him *insidiis incautum* (11.26.2).

Parthian power struggles are described in terms of *insidiae* and *doli* at 11.8-10 and elsewhere.[7] The same language is used of dynastic quarrels at Rome such as Agrippina's first scheme to poison Claudius (12.66.1), Nero's planned attack on his mother who is wary of poison because of her previous experiences (14.3.2) and Livia's alleged murder of Gaius Caesar (1.3.3). These continual echoes of diction reinforce the reader's perception that the same pattern operates in Parthia and at Rome: the *dominatio* of the eastern potentates is inescapably equated with the *res publica restituta* of the Roman principate.

Tacitus plays repeatedly on Rome's apparent unawareness of the ironic similarities between her government and that of Parthia. So at 12.10-14, which resumes the account of 11.8-10, the language applied to the Parthians both echoes and foreshadows the situation in Rome. At 12.10 the Parthian envoys decry the tyranny of Gotarzes and ask the Senate to send Meherdates, currently a hostage at Rome, to be the new king.

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the principate in the *Annals*, see H. W. Benario, "Tacitus and the Principate," *CJ* 60 (1964) 97-106.

[6] For *servitium* and *servitus* of life at Rome, cf. 1.2.1; 1.7.1; 1.81.2; 3.65.3; 6.32.4 and 6.48.2; of life in the East, cf. 2.2.2; 11.10.1 and 12.50.2.

[7] *Insidiae* and *doli* occur in the East at 2.3.2; 6.32.1; 6.43.2; 12.14.3; 12.44.4.

The legates' speech outlines with ironic accuracy Claudius' own rule just as it forecasts Agrippina's.

The first nine chapters of Book 12 have set the stage for Agrippina's gradual aggrandizement of power throughout the book. Having just learned of the empress' ambition at 12.7, the reader may well connect Gotarzes' *dominatio* (12.10.1) with Agrippina's goal (12.7.3; 12.8.2). Gotarzes' wholesale slaughter of his relatives (12.10.1) forecasts the plots of Agrippina and Nero: *iam fratres, iam propinquos, iam longius sitos caedibus exhaustos; adici coniuges gravidas, liberos parvos.* In the course of Book 12 Agrippina eliminates Lucius Silanus, Domitia Lepida and Claudius; in Book 13 Nero murders Britannicus and in Book 14, Octavia.

The Parthian legates conclude by asking Claudius to send Meherdates to rule:

> ideo regum liberos obsides dari, ut, si domestici imperii taedeat, sit regressus ad principem patresque, quorum moribus adsuefactus rex melior adsciscetur (12.10.1).[8]

This chapter follows a highly critical survey of Roman *mores* (12.1-9): the incestuous marriage of the *princeps* to his niece; the removal of Octavia's fiance, L. Silanus, on a false and ironic charge of incest with his sister; and the betrothal of Octavia to Domitius. Furthermore, the envoys' hope of a *rex melior* is ill-advised in view of the frequent failure in the *Annals* of foreign princes raised at Rome to survive back in their native *milieu:* they carry a fatal contamination with them.[9]

Claudius' pompous lecture to the Parthians at 12.11 on the principles of good government is replete with ironies for his own rule. Having identified himself with Augustus' policy (12.11.1), he extols the Augustan virtues:

[8] The last clause of 12.10.1 might also evoke Claudius: *dum socors domi, bellis infaustus ignaviam saevitia tegat. Socordia* is used of the *princeps'* last moments (12.67.1) while Agrippina drives him to *saevissima quaeque* (12.59.1). A generalized spectator sums up Claudius' Parthian policy thus at 13.6.3: *contra alii melius evenisse* (under Nero) *disserunt, quam si invalidus senecta et ignavia Claudius militiae ad labores vocaretur, servilibus iussis obtemperaturus.* Tacitus may well have dealt with these qualities in earlier books.

[9] Cf. the fate of the German prince Italicus at 11.16-17. See also Walker, op. cit., 228 on the corruption of the barbarians under Roman influence.

> addidit praecepta (etenium aderat Meherdates), ut non dominationem et servos, sed rectorem et cives cogitaret, clementiamque ac iustitiam, quanto ignota barbaris, tanto gratiora capesseret (12.11.2).

Yet *dominatio* and *servi* better describe the current Roman state of affairs than the old-fashioned, republican *rector* and *cives*. Nor can *clementia* and *iustitia* apply to the rule of the Tacitean Claudius.[10] The *princeps'* vaunted *clementia* often means punishing the innocent (Asiaticus at 11.3.1) or sparing the guilty (he tries to pardon Mnester at 11.36.2 and seems on the verge of forgiving the errant Messalina at 11.37.2).[11] Nor can *iustitia*, a rare word in the *Annals*, be applied to Claudius' acts in Books 11 and 12. His administration of justice is erratic and subjective, susceptible to the play of his own feelings or to the promptings of his wives, freedmen and courtiers.

Turning to the legates, Claudius commends Meherdates to them as an *alumnus urbis* whose *modestia* is palpable. The same *modestia* was used of Claudius by Vitellius with unintentional irony at 12.6.2 when he praised the emperor's sexual restraint even while proposing that Claudius be allowed to marry his own niece: *audivisse a parentibus, vidisse ipsos abripi coniuges ad libita Caesarum: procul id a praesenti modestia.*

Claudius ends by declaring that Rome prefers peace to hostility with the Parthians: *rem Romanam huc satietate gloriae provectam, ut externis quoque gentibus quietem velit* (12.11.3). A double irony lies behind the rhetorical façade of such statements in the Claudius books. First, Tacitus makes it clear elsewhere that Claudius' officials condone stirring up internal strife along the eastern frontier (12.48.2). Secondly, this policy of avoiding direct confrontation with Parthia, while traditional and prudent, is ineptly executed by Claudius.[12]

The misadventures of Meherdates in 12.12 and 12.14 soon reveal the reality behind Claudius' rhetoric. At 12.12.2-3, Meherdates ignores the warnings of Cassius that delay would

[10] See Syme, op. cit., 414-16 on Tacitus' use of the propaganda words of the principate.

[11] Messalina (11.32.2) and Caratacus (12.37.3) cleverly appeal to Claudius' *clementia*.

[12] On the necessity for rhetoric and diplomatic maneuver in dealing with

only breed fickleness in the *barbari* and succumbs to the treachery of Acbarus, king of the Arabs. The youth has imbibed Roman *mores* too well: *quod spretum fraude Acbari, qui iuvenem ignarum et summam fortunam in luxu ratum multos per dies attinuit apud oppidum Edessam* (12.12.3).

After making a last, desperate stand (12.14.2), Meherdates, betrayed by a client, is handed over to Gotarzes. Claudius' advice on governing, so inapplicable to the crafty Parthian mentality, is ridiculed when Gotarzes denounces his prisoner:

> atque ille non propinquum neque Arsacis de gente, sed alienigenam et Romanum increpans, auribus decisis vivere iubet, ostentui clementiae suae et in nos dehonestamento (12.14.3).

Alienigenam et Romanum increpans answers Claudius' *alumnus urbis*. This example of Parthian *clementia* reveals how unprepared Meherdates was to rule, much less to implement that virtue. Claudius' desire for *quies* in the East is made to seem fatuous through these ironic cross-references.

Intrigues within the Iberian royal family which dominate the last eastern section of the Claudius books (12.44-51) offer a dramatic summary of the dynastic conflicts at Rome in Book 12 and prepare the reader for the last step in Agrippina's rise to power, the murder of Claudius.

In 12.41-43, the chapters with which the year 51 opens, Agrippina has further consolidated her position. Nero is given the *toga virilis* so that he should seem, ominously enough, *capessendae rei publicae habilis* (12.41.1). The Senate also makes him consul-designate with proconsular *imperium extra urbem* and grants him the honorific *princeps iuventutis*. In 12.41.2, a reprise of 11.11.2, Nero appears at the circensian games in triumphal dress while Britannicus wears the *toga praetexta*. The situation has worsened: the spontaneous display of popular favor at the secular games has become a spectacle staged by Agrippina to make clear the boys' relative positions: *spectaret populus hunc decore imperatorio, illum puerili habitu, ac perinde fortunam utriusque praesumeret* (12.41.2). Finally the

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Parthia, see K. Gilmartin, "Corbulo's Campaigns in the East," *Historia* 22 (1973) 583-626, and Syme op. cit., 494.

empress removes the centurions, tribunes and freedmen sympathetic to Britannicus and uses his snub of Nero to further isolate the boy under her 'protection':

> obvii inter se Nero Britannicum nomine, ille Domitium salutavere. quod ut discordiae initium Agrippina multo questu ad maritum defert: sperni quippe adoptionem, quaeque censuerint patres, iusserit populus, intra penates abrogari; ac nisi pravitas tam infensa docentium arceatur, eruptura in publicam perniciem. commotus his quasi criminibus optimum quemque educatorem filii exilio. aut morte adficit datosque a noverca custodiae eius imponit (12.41.3).

In 12.42 the empress gains control of the praetorian guard by installing her own man, Burrus, as sole prefect. Finally, at 12.43 omens are recorded for the first time in the extant *Annals*. They presage imminent danger to the state for those who can read them, but Claudius, despite his well-known interest in traditional religious observations, fails to heed these warnings.[13]

In 12.44-51 the intertwined motifs of rivalry, murder and love recall events at Rome while forecasting developments in the closing chapters (12.52-69). A melange of rivalries evokes the constant tensions within the *domus Caesaris* in Book 12. The parallels between the situations in Iberia and Rome are multivalent. Radamistus, heir to the Iberian throne, combines the roles Nero and Agrippina play at Rome. He is both heir (as Nero) and plotter (as Agrippina). Like Nero, as a young and popular heir, he is an obvious threat to the current king, his father Pharasmanes. Also like Nero, Radamistus wins over a king, his uncle Mithridates, who treats him as a son and even gives him his daughter in marriage. Radamistus resembles Agrippina in his ill-concealed impatience to rule (*is modicum Hiberiae regnum senecta patris detineri ferocius crebriusque iactabat, quam ut cupidinem occultaret*, 12.44.3), and like her he hypocritically woos the uncle whom he intends to overthrow. Radamistus pretends to seek refuge with his uncle from the unfair treatment of his stepmother, the very injury that the rightful heir at Rome suffers:

[13] For Claudius' observation of omens, see Suetonius *Claudius* 22. At *Annals* 11.15.2 Claudius urges the formation of a college of haruspices, an act replete with irony for his own rule. Cf. Vessey, op. cit., 394.

> ita Radamistus simulata adversus patrem discordia tamquam novercae odiis impar pergit ad patruum, multaque ab eo comitate in speciem liberum cultus primores Armeniorum ad res novas inlicit, ignaro et ornante insuper Mithridate (12.44.5).

Fraternal rivalry is touched on again in this passage. Mithridates and Pharasmanes, who had been reconciled by Tiberius (6.32.3) and began cooperating again (11.8.1), are now fatally at odds. Pharasmanes does not scruple to have his brother and his own daughter killed: *illi cupido regni fratre et filia potior, animusque sceleribus paratus* (12.47.5).[14] The preceding narrative at Rome (12.25-26; 12.41) marks a similar deterioration in relations between the two royal brothers in Claudius' household.

The final parallel is between the two victims, Mithridates and Claudius. Although well meaning, Mithridates is ignorant of his nephew's true intent and succumbs to his blandishments. Consequently he is caught off guard by the youth's carefully planned attack (12.47). By adopting his own kinsman Mithridates thus paves the way for his own ruin. The extended description of Radamistus' entrapment and murder of his uncle, to which the historian devotes a whole chapter, is the culmination of the youth's plotting just as Agrippina's attack on Claudius forms the grotesque climax of the whole book.

Thus various facets of the eastern narrative mirror the volatile state of affairs within the *domus Caesaris* and point toward the seemingly inevitable murder of the emperor by Agrippina. Themes and diction of 12.44 (especially the repetition of *noverca* and *discordia* from 12.41) draw the reader back to Rome. The *patruus* at 12.44.5 recalls Agrippina's enticement of her uncle at 12.3.1: *ad eum per speciem necessitudinis crebro ventitando pellicit patruum*. At the end of 12.44 Mithridates is described in an ablative absolute clause as *ignarus* of the action of the main clause which directly affects him (12.44.5). The same construction is used of Claudius at 11.2.2 when Messalina, after prosecuting Valerius Asiaticus, proceeds against Poppaea:

[14] On the parallels between Pharasmanes and Nero refusing to witness the executions they order, see Walker, op. cit., 211.

> ipsa ad perniciem Poppaeae festinat, subditis qui terrore carceris ad voluntariam mortem propellerent, adeo ignaro Caesare, ut paucos post dies epulantem apud se maritum eius Scipionem percontaretur, cur sine uxore discubuisset, atque ille functam fato responderet.[15]

The third motif, conjugal love, which has played a sinister role in the Claudius books, first appears in an eastern scene at 12.51, the romantic story of the abandonment and rescue of Zenobia, the wife of Radamistus. The couple, forced to flee Armenia, is slowed down by the wife's pregnancy. Unable to bear the trip any longer, Zenobia begs her husband to kill her: *orare ut morte honesta contumeliis captivitatis eximeretur* (12.51.2). After an anguished scene, he stabs her and leaves her for dead on a river bank. Shepherds, at once recognizing her high rank (*et dignitate formae haud degenerem reputantes*), cure her with rustic medicines and escort her to Artaxata. The folk-tale qualities of this vignette make it a charming interlude from political strife.

But the marital devotion of Radamistus and Zenobia also points a stark contrast to the marriage of Agrippina and Claudius which has dominated the Roman narrative in Book 12 and to which the historian is about to return. The old-fashioned vow of death before dishonor is espoused in the Claudius books only by *barbari* such as Caratacus (12.34) and Zenobia.[16] Honor is not a value espoused by either of Claudius' wives, and the diction of Zenobia's plight recalls only ironically Messalina and Agrippina. In 11.37 Messalina's mother urges her to suicide as the only honorable course: *transisse vitam neque aliud quam morti decus quaerendum, sed animo per libidines corrupto nihil honestum inerat* (11.37.3-4). *Honestus* is applied to Agrippina in Book 12 with palpable irony. Vitellius proposes her to the

[15] Claudius' moral and political ignorance is ridiculed repeatedly (11.15.2; 11.25.5; 11.30.2), most strikingly when he begins his censorship *ignarus* (11.13.1) of his wife's flagrant adultery with Silius which has been described in detail in the chapter before.

[16] Eunones is moved by Mithridates' dignified appeal (*prece haud degeneri permotus*, 12.19.1), while Caratacus' dignity is contrasted with his family's grovelling before Claudius (*ceterorum preces degeneres fuere ex metu: at non Caratacus*, 12.36.3).

Senate as the ideal wife for Claudius: *nec diu anquirendum quin Agrippina claritudine generis anteiret; datum ab ea fecunditatis experimentum et congruere artes honestas* (12.6.1).[17] Her true *ars* becomes apparent in the course of the book. So at 12.59.1 she manipulates Claudius into savage acts such as the prosecution of Statilius Taurus: *At Claudius saevissima quaeque promere adigebatur eiusdem Agrippinae artibus.*[18] After the emperor's death she detains Britannicus in his room *variis artibus* while she arranges for the accession of Nero (12.68.2), and at 13.13.2 she tries to regain her influence over her son by blandishments (*versis artibus*).

These ironic cross-references between Zenobia and the Roman empresses plus the collocation of Zenobia and Radamistus with the imminent demise of Claudius, hinted at earlier (*nondum tamen summa moliri Agrippina audebat*, 12.42.1) and taken up at 12.52.1, when Furius Scribonianus is exiled for consulting the Chaldaeans about the death of the *princeps*, place events at Rome in an even more lurid light. At 12.51 a husband overcome by love (*violentia amoris et facinorum non rudis*, 12.51.3), attempts to kill his wife to preserve her honor, while the reader knows that at Rome a wife is about to kill her husband in cold blood to secure power.

Taking a structural approach to the eastern scenes need not preclude the other uses to which Tacitus puts these accounts. Aside from genuine diversion and romance, such as the description of the rite of Hercules practiced near Mt. Sunbulah (12.13), the historian also chastises Claudius on his poor choice of provincial administrators. His most striking gaffes are the appointments of his old drinking companion, Julius Paelignus, as procurator of Cappadocia, and Antonius Felix, brother of the most powerful freedman, Pallas, as a commander in Judaea.[19]

None of the other extended eastern narratives in Book 6 of Books 13-15 is as imbued with dynastic intrigue, nor do they

[17] Cf. Vitellius' first speech to the Senate urging that Claudius marry again: *quod porro honestius censoriae mentis levamentum quam adsumere coniugem, prosperis dubiisque sociam, cui cogitationes intimas, cui parvos liberos tradat* (12.5.3).

[18] Mehl, op. cit., 109 n. 107, notes the use of *ars* for Agrippina "im ethisch negativen Sinn" just as for Livia, Tiberius, Sejanus and Poppaea Sabina.

[19] Paelignus' *ignavia animi* and ridiculous physiognomy (12.49.1) recall the

foreshadow events at Rome in the same way.[20] Books 11 and 12 are distinctive in this respect with good reason. Dynastic infighting predominates in the Claudius books as it does nowhere else in the *Annals* except in Book 4 which has no long foreign narratives. The repetitious cycle of dynastic treachery and intrigue in the East dovetailed neatly with Tacitus' view of the *domus Caesaris* during Claudius' last years, and these intrigues were given broad scope and detail to enhance the main themes of the Roman narrative and lend coherence to the books as a whole.[21]

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emperor only too well. Antonius Felix's assignment to Judaea (12.54.1) is juxtaposed with the extravagant honors decreed to his brother Pallas (12.53). On the tendentiousness of the foreign affairs narratives in Book 12, see Seif, op. cit., 236.

[20] The Roman-Parthian parallels in Book 6 bring out the similarities between the two tyrants, Tiberius and Artabanus. These parallels heighten the portrayal of Tiberius rather than contributing to narrative tension.

[21] A slightly different version of this paper was delivered at the annual convention of the APA, New York, December 28, 1976. Professor George Houston and the anonymous referee of *AJP* have aided greatly in its revision.